

CHAPTER 2. PROJECTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE AND CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE SCREENING PROCESS

CRITERIA USED TO DEFINE THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

NEPA and CEQA do not provide specific guidelines for selecting future actions to include in a No-Action Alternative. CALFED has focused on those future actions that could affect the physical features of the Bay-Delta system. Local actions will generally not be considered unless they are of sizable magnitude.

CALFED has used a set of screening criteria to determine which actions to include in the No-Action Alternative. Potential actions that met all applicable criteria are proposed to be included in the No-Action Alternative. Actions that did not meet all of the applicable criteria were considered for inclusion in the cumulative impact analysis. It is important to note that although the screening criteria are well developed and rigorous, CALFED may be required to use judgment, in some instances, in screening certain actions. The criteria that were used for determining whether an action should be considered for inclusion are the following.

Criterion 1: Has the Action Been Approved for Implementation? To be included in the No-Action Alternative, implementation of the action must have been approved by the project sponsor or by the ultimate authorizing agency. In the case of construction-related projects, this approval must include authorization for design and construction.

Criterion 2: Does the Action Have Funding for Implementation? To be included in the No-Action Alternative, an action must have sufficient approved funding to provide for its implementation.

Criterion 3: Does the Action Have Final Environmental Documents? This criterion would be satisfied if all environmental documents and approvals necessary for implementation of the action have been completed.

Criterion 4: Does the Action Have Final Environmental Permits and Approvals? This criterion would be satisfied if all final major permits and approvals (e.g., a Section 404 permit or Endangered Species Act compliance) necessary to implement the action have been obtained.

Criterion 5: Will the Action Be Excluded from the CALFED Actions? Actions that will be included in the action alternatives for CALFED will not be included in the No-Action Alternative.

A comparison of the action alternatives with the No-Action Alternative would be distorted if an action were included in both.

Criterion 6: Would the Effects of the Action Be Identifiable at the Level of Detail Being Considered for CALFED Analysis? If a project's effects would be undetectable or minor in the programmatic impact analysis, the project need not be included in the No-Action Alternative. For example, if a project to be implemented by a water user could change localized conditions near the project but would not affect regional conditions or if those changes would be minor, the action may not need to be included in the No-Action Alternative. This criterion is intended to avoid inclusion of actions that would not materially affect the outcome of the CALFED alternatives analysis.

LIST OF PROJECTS CONSIDERED

Table 1 provides a list of specific major projects and studies that was developed by CALFED to be screened for inclusion in the No-Action Alternative. A total of 95 projects were considered in the screening process. The list of projects developed for the screening process was obtained from the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) No-Action Alternative Technical Appendix and included feasibility studies and other projects that are no longer being considered by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and other State and local entities. Additional water projects recommended by CALFED staff and various stakeholders supplemented the CVPIA list. The list also includes several projects suggested by various entities at the public workshop conducted on July 11, 1996, and in comment letters. Those actions that are not included in the No-Action Alternative were further considered for inclusion in the cumulative impact analysis. The first part of the table is derived directly from the CVPIA Programmatic EIS (PEIS) process and contains a comprehensive list of actions, studies, and projects.

The list is not intended to identify every individual action, project, or program that has been proposed, but rather to focus on the major activities that should be considered for inclusion in the No-Action Alternative.

SCREENING FOR INCLUSION IN THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No-Action Alternative will be based initially on the facilities, operations, and institutional and regulatory considerations in place under existing conditions. The purpose of the screening process is to determine which additional actions, projects, and programs should be added to the existing-conditions scenario to form the No-Action Alternative.

Table 2 contains the preliminary results of the screening process for inclusion of actions in the CALFED No-Action Alternative. Projects that are currently under construction but not yet operational will be included in the No-Action Alternative but not in benchmark modeling runs. A

complete discussion of screening results is provided in Appendix B. For a project to be included in the No-Action Alternative, a "yes" response was required under each column heading. For each action, study, or project listed, the criteria were reviewed and a response was made to each question until a "no" response was derived, in which case the action, study, or project was excluded from the No-Action Alternative, or until all responses were determined to be positive, in which case the item is proposed to be included in the No-Action Alternative. Using the screening criteria, 15 projects are currently at the stage where they can be added to the existing-conditions scenario and included in the CALFED No-Action Alternative. As shown in Table 2, the following projects are being considered for inclusion in the No-Action Alternative:

- Coastal Aqueduct,
- CVPIA (dedication of 800,000 acre-feet per year and portion of incremental Level 4 water to refuges),
- Interim Reoperation of Folsom Reservoir (Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation [Reclamation]),
- Kern Water Bank (phases already completed or under construction),
- Los Vaqueros Reservoir Project,
- Metropolitan Water District - Eastside Reservoir Project,
- Metropolitan Water District - Inland Feeder Project,
- Monterey Agreement,
- New Melones Conveyance Project,
- Sacramento River Flood Control System Evaluation (partial),
- Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Levees Subvention Project,
- Semitropic Water Storage District/Metropolitan Water District - Semitropic Groundwater Banking Project,
- Shasta Temperature Control Device,
- Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and
- Trinity River Restoration Program.

Several projects that met the criteria for inclusion in the No-Action Alternative and that were originally included have been removed because they did not have effects on CVP or SWP water management operations or would not be identifiable at a program level. These projects include Kesterson Reservoir Cleanup Program, Spring Creek Toxicity Program, Cache Creek Basin Study, and the West Sacramento Project.

SCREENING FOR INCLUSION IN THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

Once the actions were screened for inclusion in the No-Action Alternative, CALFED conducted a second screening of the remaining actions, studies, and projects to determine whether those items should be included in the cumulative impact analysis. Results of the screening to identify cumulative actions are provided in Appendix B for each project. Similar to the approach for screening items for inclusion in the No-Action Alternative, the remaining items were assessed by comparison of each of the items with the screening criteria for inclusion in the cumulative impact analysis (Table 3). Each of the criteria was evaluated and the item was considered until either a "no" response was appropriate or, if all responses were positive, the action was considered appropriate to include in the cumulative impact analysis. The following 13 projects met the screening criteria and are tentatively considered appropriate for inclusion in the cumulative impact analysis:

- American River Water Resources Investigation,
- American River Watershed Project,
- CVPIA (remaining),
- Contra Costa Pumping Plant Modifications,
- Delta Wetlands Project,
- Folsom South Canal Connection Project,
- Interim South Delta Program,
- Montezuma Wetlands Project,
- Pardee Reservoir Enlargement Project,
- Red Bluff Diversion Dam Fish Passage Program,
- Refuge Water Supply Study,
- Sacramento River Flood Control System Evaluations (partial), and
- Sacramento Water Forum Process.

After further review, one project, the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID) Fish Screen Project, which was initially shown as meeting the cumulative analysis criteria in the workshop packet, was eliminated.

POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

It is possible that during preparation of the Programmatic EIR/EIS, additional projects will be developed to the point where they would pass the screening criteria described above. CALFED will review such projects and determine the need for any additional analyses to incorporate these projects into the cumulative impact analysis.